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THE

MISTRESS OF THE MILL

A COMEDIETTA

IN

ONE ACT

BY

W. T. MONCRIEFF, Esq.

This Piece, a Translation from "La Munière de Marly," the property of Messrs. GREENWOOD and PHELPS, may be played in any Theatre in England free of Author's charge

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THE MISTRESS OF THE MILL.

First performed at Sadler's Wells, on Wednesday, October 17th, 1849.

CHARACTERS.

Marquis of Pretengil	Mr. H. Mellon.
Corney Poppy	Mr. Henry Nye.
Clem	Mr. Franks.
Marchioness of Pretengil	Mrs. G. Smith.
Flora Granger	Miss J. St. George.

COSTUMES.

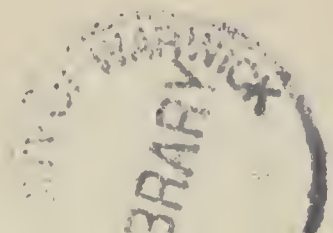
Marquis.—Green frock, trimmed with gold lace, long white waistcoat, white breeches, cravat, high boots, wig and queue, three-cornered hat.

Poppy.—White coat, waistcoat and breeches, grey stockings, shoes.

Clem.—Smock frock, breeches, stockings and shoes.

Marchioness.—Green coat, trimmed with gold, green petticoat, hat and black feather.

Flora.—Chintz tucked up dress, straw hat.



PREFATORY REMARKS.

As some controversy was ereated by the produetion of this Vaudeville, in which the right of general translation was mooted, a few remarks may not be deemed out of place, if, indeed they be not absolutely required. However strange it may appear, I was positively charged, on the production of this Piece by Mr. Edward Morton, the *translator* of "*The Windmill*," and "*Eton Boy*," with gross plagiarism from him, he sweepingly asserting it to be merely *his piece* of the "*Windmill*" played under another name, coolly claimed to be paid for the performance of it, and threatening immediate legal proceedings against Messrs Phelps and Greenwood, the joint Lessees of Sadler's Wells, if his demand was not instantly complied with; Messrs. Phelps and Greenwood will be remembered as having from the lay-pulpit of their stage, nobly manifested as far as the Legitimate Drama goes, the divine doetrine of *right*, that "The first shall be last, and the last first." His threat, however, Mr. Edward Morton has been wise enough to drop, like a hot cinder. The following plain statement of facts, which has before partly appeared in that exeellent paper, the "*Era*," may tend to set the public right in the matter:—

In the spring of the by-gone year, I was applied to by Mr. Greenwood, to translate and adapt for the "Wells," some French pieces, which he brought me for that purpose. I at first refused, on the ground that other persons had translated them before me;—he, however, overruled this by the liberal terms he offered, and by his pointing out the ease of the task, but more espeeially, by his saying, that the translators demanded such extravagant terms for the nightly performance of their adaptations, that, changed as the times were, the theatre could not meet the expense. The first piece he requested me to do, was MM. Melesville and Duveyrier's Vaudeville, "*La Meunière de Marly*," produeed at the "Variétés" as far back as 1840. I remarked, "if my memory serves me rightly, a *literal* translation of this piece was brought out some years sinee at Drury Lane, under the title of "*The Windmill*," by Mr. Edward Morton. I, therefore, feel no desire to have any-

thing to do with it; at all events, if I should do it, I must stick to the original, I cannot follow any deviations Mr. Edward Morton may have made." Mr. Greenwood replied, that he did not by any means wish me to trespass on anything Mr. Morton had done for *himself*, but he took leave to think I had as much right to translate a French piece as any other person; that "*The Windmill*" was certainly a very good translation, as far as its being *literal* went; but that he conceived from my long experience, I ought, without interfering with my precursor, to produce quite as effective a translation as he had done, or else it would be a pity—there was no answering this. I, therefore, consented to undertake the *job*, with the remark, however, that "I would rather he had asked me to do something *original;* still, I was well aware that in these degenerate days of the drama, nothing at all original, except, indeed, some "high intellectual play" in five acts, introduced under the auspices of some "eminent tragedian," who had the means of *commanding* its performance, could expect to realise one tenth part the sum that might be gained from the mere translation of any new piece brought out at the time in Paris." "One person, as you say," said I "has certainly quite as much right to translate a foreign piece as another. All our good solid English joints must now be done to *rags*, with appropriate *costume*, have all the goodness stewed out of them, and be frittered away by blue and red fires—into mere hashes, in the most approved French style, to be at all relished by the public, or rendered suitable to their present taste." I according translated the piece, literally, merely leaving out some passages, which might very justly have been considered by our audiences *contra bonos mores*. The Vaudeville itself, I found, dramatised from an anecdote I recollected having read in a jest-book, in my boyqood, of a circumstance which actually occurred near Windsor, in the time of Charles the Second. My *Amanuensis* read the French original to me, and from that, I dictated a translation and adaptation, with scarcely an alteration, merely heightening up the dialogue and transferring the scene from France to England, where, as I have stated, the fact is said to have originally occurred. I called the piece "*The Mistress of the Mill.*" Having unhappily *lost my sight*, I had no desire to trouble myself with Mr. Edward Morton's printed translation, "*The Windmill.*"—Indeed, I did not exactly conceived I should have gained anything by such a reference, and gladly avoided the trouble, no less from convenience than from a strict sense of right. The piece was regularly licensed and produced in due course, and met with the most complete success. What then was the surprise of Messrs. Greenwood and Phelps and myself, when, in the

early part of November last, they, as I have before stated, received a letter from Mr. Edward Morton, stating that my piece was *his* piece, played under another *name;* that it contained all his original matter and alterations, modestly demanding the instant nightly payment for its performance, or in default, threatening legal proceedings. I may remark, that previously to the licensing and performing of "*The Mistress of the Mill*," it had been most carefully compared with Mr. Edward Morton's translation, "*The Windmill*," both by Mr. Greenwood (himself no inconsiderable dramatist) and Mr. Phelps, a gentleman whose acumen, integrity, and general competency for the due performance of such an ordeal, no one will venture to question. I am the more anxious to clear myself from a charge for which there is no sort of ground, and which I most unequivocally assert, on my honour, *to be utterly false*—as during my long and active career as a dramatic writer, playwright, translator, and manager, this is the first time I have ever been charged with an unfair action. Claiming the seniority of the stage as a writer from length of service, rather than from positive age, I cannot tamely sit down under so gross and unfounded a charge. I have yet to learn that because a gentleman translates a piece, no other person after that is to touch it. A translation is a translation—and the more close a translation is to the original, the more alike will one translation be to another. Mr. Edward Morton's respected father, a gentleman of the highest genius and integrity, the author of "*Speed the Plough*," might as well have charged me, in the year 1830, with plagiarism, in bringing out "*The Irresistibles*," he having but a short time before brought out "*The Invincibles*," at Covent garden—both of them being adapted from Theaulon's very clever Folie Vaudeville, "*Les Femmes Soldats*," originally borrowed from the popular German farce, "*Die Sieben Mädchen in Uniform.*" I might as well have charged the Hon. Mrs. Gore with plagiarism, because, after I had produced a translation of Scribe's "*Salvoisie*," under the title of "*The Queen's Lover*," she brought out another version as "*The Queen's Champion*," at the Haymarket; or to come nearer home, have impertinently accused Mr. Charles Matthews with the same high crime and misdemeanour, because, many years after I had produced an adaptation of Kotzebue's little farce, "*Die Gefährliche Nachbarschaft*," at the Olympic, he brought out another version of it at the Haymarket, under the title of "*Pyramus and Thisbe;*" or have complained of the ingenious Mr. Planché, for having brought out a version of "*Le Cabaret de Lustucru*," under the title of "*Spring Gardens*," at the Haymarket, with the same natural change of country and

period, when I had formerly produced an adaptation of it at the Strand Theatre, in 1837, under the title of "*The Tobit's Dog*," as the printed copy will sufficiently testify. On "*The Tobit's Dog*" being re-produced after the appearance of "*Spring Gardens*," I was charged by a sapient paper with feloniously stealing it from Mr. Planché. Well knowing that journal was assured of the contrary, I did not think it worth while to contradict the error. Again, that most amiable and accomplished gentleman and scholar, Mr. W. J. Walter, together with Signor Manfredo Maggioni, might with even a greater show of justice feel themselves aggrieved, because, having previously translated *Norma*, *La Cenerentola*, *Lucia di Lammermoor*, *Don Pasquale*, *Massaniello*, and the *Prophète*, I, in my recent illustrated edition of the opera, "*Libretti*," of those celebrated works, had, together with the Italian and French originals, given another translation and adaptation of them, line for line as literally as possible; but these gentlemen had both of them too much liberality and good sense to do anything so absurd. It would surprise the public were I to point out to them the originals of many of our most popular pieces. In some cases, where the authors have proved themselves able original dramatists, as in those of Mr. Planché, Mr. Buckstone, and Mr. Charles Mathews, and other gentlemen of acknowledged talent, translations have in their hands become almost original pieces; but both "*The Mistress of the Mill*," and "*The Windmill*," are little more than literal translations, and neither of them owe much to their adaptors. But to prove how little Mr. Edward Morton has been *damnified*, either *theatrically* or otherwise, by the production of my piece, "*The Mistress of the Mill*," I here boldly "shame the rogues and *print it*." If the dramatic purveyors of our day would combine in agreeing that it should be considered against etiquette for any one to touch a French piece, after it had once been translated, cheerfully would I subscribe to such a proposition; but if (which would be better still) they would agree *never to touch a French piece at all*, but trust to their own *native talent*—thrice would I hail such a determination. It would be the first step towards restoring our lost drama; it would rid us of the wretched crew of vampires and pretenders that have too long fattened on the very life's blood of our dramatic resources. No disparagement is wished for a moment to be made to the productions of the French stage; they are, for the major part, though somewhat light and conventional, highly ingenious and artistical, and in the hands of gentlemen of experience and talent may be made very valuable adjuncts to our amusement. Look at the capital farce of the "*Beehive*," for instance, founded on Pigault le Brun's vaudeville, "*Les Ri-*

vaux d'eux mêmes ;" George Colman's matchless "*Blue Devils*," taken from Patrat's "*L'Anglais ; ou le Fou raissonable, &c., &c.*" In the hands of men of genius, charcoal becomes a diamond—but the reverse is unhappily too often the case with us. A number of young *gents*, as they are called—clerks, shopmen, &c.,—deriving from those occupations the means of supplying the necessites of *the day*, on the strength of possessing a boarding-school knowledge of French, and being able to translate "*avoir*" into "*to have*," make miserable literal versions of any French piece that may be brought out and happen to become popular, spoiling the *materiel* by the prejudgment of the public for the use of anybody else. They persuade managers to act them by furnishing them for *nothing ;* get publishers to print them on the same terms, and boldly set up for authors, complacently talking of *my* piece this and *my* piece that, ruining the professor whose business it is, and trusting to an unworthy remuneration by exorbitantly pouncing on any incautious individual who may, through ignorance or heedlessness, make use, without their written permission, for ever so short a period, of any of their miserable productions.

Mr. Edward Morton, in his threatening letter to the managers of the "Wells," said "that his *lawyer* was in the house with the book of his piece, with which he compared mine." As a matter of *evidence*, the "*learned gentleman*" should have had the *French* piece, he would then have seen if there was anything in my piece that was *not* in the French piece. It would have been time enough to have ascertained afterwards if there was anything in my piece that *was* in Mr. Morton's piece, and *not* in the French one ; there would have been some sense in this, as well as law—but there is neither the one nor the other in the contrary proceeding. Of course, the two pieces, coming from one common stock, would be similar in all the main particulars. The gentleman who writes the theatrical articles for the "*Era*," —a critic distinguished for his general liberality, impartiality, and good sense, and for whose character I have the highest respect and admiration—must pardon me in saying that I think his censure of the production of this piece was quite uncalled for, and that his remarks very strangely contradict themselves. He says, "on the first production of this piece, we did not hesitate to condemn the putting forward an *old piece* with a new title, and the names of the characters altered." Now what is the fact? Is not "*The Mistress of the Mill*," a more literal translation of "*La Meunière de Marly*," than "*The Windmill ?*" And as to the names of the characters being altered, did not Mr. Edward Morton himself set the example ? Is there one character of his translation of "*The Windmill*," the name

of which is not totally altered from its prototype in "*La Munière de Marly?*" Again, the critic says, "it is hardly worthy of Messrs. Greenwood and Phelps to get up cheap translations under new names;"—here is the same mistake of the new names that I have just pointed out: we have no feminine of miller in our language;—if my name be new, it is, as I have said, much nearer to the original than that of Mr. Edward Morton. Now with regard to cheap translations, does the critic mean to say that a mere literal translation should be paid as much for as an original piece? I can assure him that the terms given me by Messrs. Greenwood and Phelps, taking the expenditure of time and talent into account, paid me much better than any original piece would have done. The critic very handsomely acquits me of any intention to wrong any one, and, in the same breath, strongly reprobates the bringing forward the piece by Messrs. Greenwood and Phelps. Now is there not something very like inconsistency in this? If I am right, can Messrs. Greenwood and Phelps be wrong? If Messrs. Greenwood and Phelps be wrong, can I be right? We are each of us equally *particeps criminis*—if indeed there be any criminality in the business; nay, I must even be the chief criminal, and we must alike be found guilty or acquitted. It is but common justice to Messrs. Greenwood and Phelps to make these observations: I cannot consent to let any blame be shifted off my shoulders to those of any one else.

When Mr. Edward Morton first brought his charge against me, I was not aware there were other Mr. Mortons, and by styling him Mr. Morton, jun. confounded him with his younger brother, Mr. J. M. Morton, who has catered, as I understand, very successfully for the public, no less in his happy adaptations from the French stage, than in several original openings to Pantomines, &c.—not quite so easy a task as many worthy persons may be apt to imagine—I speak from repeated experience. Mr. J. M. Morton, in his refutation of what I trust he saw was an unintentional error, used the little advantage it gave him in so gentlemanly and good-humoured a manner—his retort was *really* so courteous, that immediately called from me the most ample "amende honourable" in my power. To prove I had no mercenary motives, as insinuated in this affair—no wish to interfere with Mr. Edward Morton, I had in the first instance translated the piece, out and out, for Messrs. Greenwood and Phelps, reserving to myself no right whatever, except the right of printing it, which I should not have done with so very a trifle, had not Mr. Edward Morton himself forced me to the step. In self-defence I have printed the piece verbatim et literatim from the prompt book of the theatre, as played, which

the Publisher will prove. Thus the public may have an opportunity of judging for themselves, by comparing it with the "*Windmill*," and the original "*La Meunière de Marly*," how far I have stolen from Mr. Morton's translation, and how I have been faithful to the original, he must therefore thank himself for any consequences that may spring out of his accusation. It is needless to say, that after much vapouring by Mr. Morton's precious "Limb of the Law," notice of action being given, &c. the affair has ended in a mere bottle of smoke.

February 14, 1850.

THE

MISTRESS OF THE MILL.

SCENE.—*A Furnished Room in the lower part of a Mill.*

The door of entrance at back, ascended by a ladder, leading from the main road—a window near it. On R. *a door leading to the upper part of the Mill and bolting-room. On side to* L. *of audience, the door of Flora's room, with practicable window over it. Over the bolting room, about two-thirds of the height of the stage, a practicable aperture, through which the empty sacks are shot. A flower-bin is also at the back. In front to the* R. *a table, an account-book, inkstand, &c. On* L. *another table, on which is work box, &c., china vase, with an immense nosegay.*

CORNEY POPPY *is discovered telling empty sacks, which* CLEM *throws to him through the aperture above. The click-clack of the mill is heard as scene opens.*

CLEM. (*throwing down sacks.*) Twenty-seven.
POPPY. (*repeating.*) Twenty-seven.
CLEM. Twenty-eight.
POPPY. Twenty eight.
CLEM. Twenty-nine, and that's all. (*disappears.*)
POPPY. That's all! why its twenty-nine! what a fool. Oh! I see, I suppose as he's gone, he means there's no more—so much the better; hallo, I say stop that noise Clem, the wind has fallen—there isn't enough to fill a pint pot—not a breath of air stirring. (*the click clack of mill ceases.*) No more grinding to-day, so I'll return to my accounts. (*goes to table where book is.*) Take one from one and there remains nothing—then there's no use casting it up. (*noise without, he listens.*) Ulloa! what noise is that?—wheels, another waggon—more grist to the mill. (*goes and looks out at door at back.*) Jemini! what's this—this is no waggon—coachman and footman—looks like a carriage. Ah! it is her ladyship, the Marchioness of Pretengil, I saw at the castle. Can she be bringing her corn to our mill herself?

MARCHIONESS. (*without.*) A ladder! mount a ladder! horrible!

POPPY. Hold fast by the rope, your ladyship, it is very strong.

MARCH. Stand out of the way, Oronooko

Enters and looks round.

So this is what they call a windmill, is it? How different to what I had pictured one to myself—(*speaking at back.*)—Yo need not come up Oronooko, remain with the carriage. That's my Ethiopian domestic, young man.

POPPY. (*running and looking out.*) A blackamoor! Oh, the devil! No, don't come up Mr. Heathen-opium, the flour may spoil your complexion, make you look quite pale.

(*pushes things on one side, and places a stool for the* MARCHIONESS, *wiping off dust with the tale of his coat.*

There your ladyship. (*making a leg.*)

MARCH. Baugh! (*seats herself haughtily.*)

POPPY. (*aside.*) What a beautiful pair of eyes she has got—just like his majesty the king's own diamond shoe buckles.

MARCH. (*smelling at her essence box.*) Is the mistress of the mill at home?

POPPY. (*stammering.*) Eh, eh! my cousin Flora? No—no, your ladyship, she's gone to the market to sell our old grey ass, poor Neddy Bray, he's so obstinate. Had she known you were coming she certainly would have given you the preference, but Corney Poppy, the cousin of the mill is here, very much at your service, ma'am. (*making another leg.*)

MARCH. (*laughing.*) Cousin of the mill! no matter, I will wait till she returns, I have something of consequence to say to her; besides, I should like to see this paragon, for in all our circles I hear nothing spoken of but the beauty of the Flower of Datchet, as she is called. She seems fairly to have turned all the heads of our courtiers, old and young—all are ready to throw themselves at her feet—my monster among the rest! (*adjusting necklace.*) Is she really so handsome, friend, as people say she is?

POPPY. (*rather curtly.*) Handsome! how should I know?

MARCH. (*aside.*) Louts like him know nothing—(*aloud.*)—She is at all events young, it appears.

POPPY. Perhaps so; she is three months older than I am, and I shall be twenty next Candlemas.

MARCH. Ha, ha, ha!

POPPY. You see my lady, I never had father nor mother—people say I am a preposterous child.

MARCH. *(laughing.)* Preposterious! oh, I see. Posthumous, you mean.

POPPY. Yes, my lady, I'm an orphan like my cousin Flora; I was just turned eight years old when my grandfather took my little cousin and me on his knees. "My little Flora," said he to her, "look at poor Poppy here, he has nothing in the world; you, my darling, will be rich, will be my heiress. Both of you are orphans, promise me, when you grow up, and I'm no longer with you, that you will never abandon Corney." *(imitating tones of a child.)* "No, grandpapa," said my cousin, with her sweet little voice and her pretty little cherub face, I think I see her now, "No grandpapa, I'll never desert dear Corney, he shall always share half I have, doll and all."

MARCH. *(moved.)* The good hearted little creature.

POPPY. And she has kept her word too, my lady; our grandfather soon after dying, I had the same schooling as herself, learned to read and write A B C, pothooks and hangers and all that. On coming into possession of her little patrimony she kindly let me still continue in the mill; here I am her head man, she allows me a bran new suit of clothes every twelve months, besides pocket money. But she is all goodness to everybody— *(much moved.)* poor dear Flora, and I can do nothing to prove my gratitude for her. *(wiping eyes.)* Pardon me, my lady, but when I think of it, it makes me cry like a fool.

MARCH. Your feelings do you credit, Puppy, I mean Poppy; with such a cousin as she has got, she must be quite happy.

POPPY. *(wiping eyes.)* Not so very happy, my lady, if you knew all. What principally vexes me is, that she has been for some time past as full of whims and fancies as any fine lady— I beg pardon, present company, you know—sometimes she laughs without any cause, then she bursts into tears quite as unreasonably, and yet, she has got plenty of money; and then she's young and pretty, as you say, and more than that, single. What can she wish for farther?

MARCH. Everything; young and single, with plenty of money, and, no—monstrous! I could soon prescribe a cure!

POPPY. Eh? What's that? *(noise without, he listens.)* Ah! she comes; yes, I know her steps. *(runs to back.)* Come in, come in, cousin.

Enter FLORA, *in rustic attire, neat, but at the same time rather coquettish, singing.*

FLORA. *(not seeing* MARCHIONESS.) Good day to you, Corney; good day to your good-humoured face. *(playfully patting him on face.)*

POPPY. *(delighted.)* How pleased she is—how happy I am!

FLORA. (*taking off her little market cloak, sees* MARCHIONESS.) Oh, pardon me, my lady! I did not see your ladyship; this is an honour. (*curtseying.*)

MARCH. What, you know me, then, child?

FLORA. (*respectfully.*) I have only had the pleasure of seeing your ladyship once before—but no one can forget—(*curtseys.*)

MARCH. (*flattered, aside.*) She speaks very sensibly for a person of her class—she is rather handsome too. (*aloud.*) I wish to have a little conversation with you, child. I must meet my lord, the marquis at the royal banquet to-day, but before—

POPPY. Bless me, talking of the marquis, have you sold our old donkey, cousin?

FLORA. Yes, for ten crowns, Corney.

POPPY. (*to* MARCHIONESS.) A good riddance. A capital sell; the stupid brute, he is not worth five. (MARCHIONESS *winces.*)

FLORA. There, take your share. (*gives money.*) Now leave us a short time, Corney. (*tapping him on cheek.*) You hear her ladyship wishes to speak to me. (*kindly.*) How blooming you look this morning, you have quite a colour.

POPPY. (*aside.*) I should think so, patting me on the cheek in that way. (*aloud.*) I'll go directly, cousin. *Exit at back* R. H.

FLORA. I wait your ladyship's commands, if I can in any way be useful—

MARCH. No! It is I who have come to render *you* a service, child.

FLORA. You, Madam?

MARCH. Yes, listen; you are pretty, and, I am told, you are prudent, two things which are rarely met with, united in one person; this interests me; I also know you have hitherto withstood all the seductive arts of our court profligates, both young and old.

FLORA. (*aside, smiling.*) If she knew her fine husband was the head of the profligates—

MARCH. Now this is all very well; but beware of playing with edged tools, Flora!

FLORA. (*smiling.*) Oh, no fear, your ladyship! though, to be sure, they do breathe sighs enough to turn my mill in a calm; when they come calling me "angel!" "goddess!" and all that stuff, I look at my stuff petticoat and laugh.

MARCH. That's all very well, yet still I think your safest plan will be to get married, Flora, and, indeed, the object of my present visit, is, expressly to recommend a husband to you.

FLORA. Is it possible that your ladyship should condescend to—

MARCH. Yes, the individual I allude to is Mr. Cullender, my head cook, a most respectable person.

FLORA. Mr. Cullender, ha, ha! poor old gentleman! he sends me poetry and pastry, billet doux and biscuits; I return the one and eat the other! I am much obliged to your ladyship, but I can never marry Mr. Cullender.

MARCH. He is somewhat *passé*, certainly, but—

FLORA. (*ironically.*) You must excuse me, my lady, declining the offer—greatly flattered and all that, Mr. Cullender is the very Cupid of Custards, I confess that, but still—

MARCH. Ah! you love another—I understand.

FLORA. (*smiling.*) I did not say so, your ladyship.

MARCH. (*smiling.*) But I read it in your eyes—what's his name?—come, be candid.

FLORA. Excuse me, my lady, but that's *my* secret.

MARCH. Oh! certainly; well, I will inform the unfortunate Cullender of his ill-luck; I shall spoil his dinner for a day at least, I dare say, poor fellow. Well, when you *do* marry, you must pay me a wedding visit—I must insist on it, I am quite curious to see this mysterious lover of yours—call my people. (*hunting horn heard in distance.*) Ah! what is that?

FLORA. (*looking out.*) 'Tis the royal hunt! no doubt they are going through the forest.

Re-enter POPPY R. H., *who looks off at back.*

POPPY. Ha! ha! how they are galloping on, see how they are treading down Farmer Stubb's corn! Oh, its delightful.

FLORA. Call her ladyship's servants to bring up the carriage, Corney.

POPPY. I will, cousin; here blackey, her ladyship's carriage—make haste, Snowball.

MARCH. (*to* FLORA.) Adieu, child, think on what I've said.

FLORA. I shall, your ladyship; good morning, my lady.

POPPY. (*aside to* MARCHIONESS.) Has your ladyship discovered the secret?

MARCH. The same as yours. She is in love!

POPPY. (*aside.*) Poor Flora!

MARCH. Adieu, child—keep up your spirits. I am sorry to leave you; but we shall meet again. (*looking at* POPPY.) He is rather good looking, but seems very stupid.

MARCHIONESS *exits through door at back down ladder,* POPPY *watching her.*

FLORA. (R. C.—*arranging furniture.*) Yes, yes, I will marry—marry some honest young fellow of my own rank. I have one in my eye—(*eyeing* POPPY.) one who would love me: but

he *must* love me; and, at present, he whom I have selected does not seem to think of love. What is he looking at now?

POPPY. (*at back looking down.*) That's what I call something like a woman. Oh, what a beautiful leg! what a calf!

FLORA. (*going up door, hastily pushing him aside, and boxing his ears.*) What are you standing staring at there for, sir?

POPPY. (*laughing.*) Why, didn't you tell me I must be gallant?

FLORA. (*out of temper, and crosses to* L.) Yes, but not with the marchioness; that's the way you lose your time, instead of making up the book, is it?

POPPY. (*going to table,* R. H.) In her tantrums again. Ah! it's all along of her being in love. What a thing love is. (*casting up.*) Add one to one, and that makes three.

FLORA. (*on opposite side, seeing nosegay on work-table.*) Oh, what a beautiful nosegay!

POPPY. (*calculating.*) Multiply by one, add one to two—sum total, seventeen.

FLORA. Where did these flowers come from, Corney?

POPPY. Divide one by nought—

FLORA. Will you answer me, sir?

POPPY. Fifteen. (*to her.*) Don't you remember what this day is, cousin?

FLORA. The fifteenth—my birthday. Is it possible that you remembered the day? that is kind of you. Thank you, Corney, thank you.

POPPY. (*seated* R., *laughing.*) No, it was not me: no, one of Mr. Cullender's scullions brought it as a birthday present, with some raspberry jam—I ate the jam.

FLORA. (*seated* L.—*pettishly aside.*) Vulgar things! Marigold, peonies, tulips, butte-rcups—(*pulling them to pieces, and throwing them on the floor.*) What imperturbable coolness! Perhaps he does not understand me. I'll try him further.

POPPY. (*at accounts.*) Subtract one—

FLORA. (*sitting and taking work, in low voice.*) Corney!—(*louder.*) Corney! leave off your arithmetic. How is it, now that I have come home, that you have nothing to say to me?

POPPY. (*surprised.*) Why didn't you tell me, just this moment, to attend to the books?

FLORA. There'll be plenty of opportunity for that another time. Come now, and sit down by me, and let us have a little cozey chat.

POPPY. (*aside.*) Poor cousin! but I must take pity on her. (*takes low stool,* R. C.) Here I am, cousin.

FLORA. (*making him sit down close to her.*) Well, now then, what shall we talk about, Corney?

POPPY. *(seated* R. C., *rubbing his forehead.)* Something pleasant—oh! I have it; farmer Stubb's old grey mare is dead.

FLORA. Do you call that pleasant?

POPPY. And they do think that the oats won't be quite so plentiful this year.

FLORA. *(shrugging shoulders.)* Oats! Psha! how provoking he is.

POPPY. *(laughing.)* Then they say, too, that lame Jenny is going to be married to bandy-legged Dick; but I can't believe that.

FLORA. No, nor I neither; but apropos, Corney, talking of marriage, what will you say when I tell you that her ladyship, the marchioness, came here, just now, to propose a husband to me?

POPPY. Ah, who was it?

FLORA. Her head cook, Mr. Cullender.

POPPY. Ah, I should like a cousin like him—I should always get a sop in the pan then.

FLORA. Glutton! do you think I could love an old fellow of sixty?

POPPY. *(with a knowing look.)* Ah, ah! you have a younger man in your eye then?

FLORA. *(confused.)* What do you mean, Corney? Can you have discovered—

POPPY. *(nudging her.)* Yes, yes, I know all about it, cousin. I say, who is the lucky chap? If he does not make you happy, I'll break every bone in his body.

FLORA. *(shrugging shoulders.)* He is very amiable; but I shall not tell you his name. A woman should not be the first to confess her passion for anybody, so I shall keep my secret.

POPPY. *(moving chair back.)* Is it possible that there can be anybody that wouldn't be struck comical by you? Such a foot and ankle, such bright eyes, such a colour, such cheeks—the fellow must be half blind.

FLORA. Not exactly; but he always looks another way.

POPPY. That proves what I say—that he's half blind. I tell you he must be a perfect noodle.

FLORA. *(sighing.)* No, no, Poppy, not a noodle, dear. *(goes to* L.)

POPPY. *(aside.)* Poor thing, what a taking she's in. Is he handsomish, cousin?

FLORA. *(looking at him.)* Not *very* bad looking, Corney, when he minds his dress. How carelessly you have brushed your hair this morning, Poppy—your collar, too. *(arranging collar.)*

POPPY. Give me some clue that I may find him out, cousin, will you?

(FLORA *takes off his handkerchief, from which she shakes a quantity of flour, refolds it, and ties it on.*

FLORA. *(tenderly arranging his handkerchief.)* Well, then, last Whit-Monday that ever was, Poppy, I would not dance because he would not ask me to be his partner. Now, can you find out?

POPPY. No, I'm not warm yet. I did not take any notice.

FLORA. *(piqued.)* Not take any notice?

POPPY. No; I was playing at hide and seek with big Kitty; I caught her behind an old elm tree, and she told me, ha, ha! that it was the rule of the game, whoever was caught should be kissed.

FLORA. *(angrily.)* And you kissed her?

POPPY. *(laughing.)* I was obliged to follow the rule of the game, of course. *(she ties his handkerchief very tight.)* Hollo! I say you'll choke me. What are you about, cousin—what are you doing?

FLORA. *(passionately.)* What you deserve—what you deserve! Cornelius, your libertine sort of life would set anyone against you: at your age, never even to have thought of marriage—it's dreadful!

POPPY. *(thunderstruck.)* Cousin!

FLORA. Yes; but you are no use to any one—you are only a burden.

POPPY. *(surprised.)* A burden, cousin?

FLORA. Yes, a burden. If you think it pleasant for me to support you in idleness, you are mistaken; your accounts, too, do you imagine they can make themselves up? *(spitefully.)*

POPPY. *(going to table.)* But it was yourself, Flora, that—

FLORA. *(stamping foot.)* But—but—but there must be an end of this. I will not bear it any longer: things shall not go on in this manner. (*sits*, L., *with back to him making a noise with stool.*)

POPPY. *(hurt, and sitting*, R., *on opposite side.)* No, no; you are right, cousin—things must not go on, indeed, in this manner; you want to drive me away from you, I see you do. I know not where I am, or what I am doing. *(opening book.)* One and one make seventeen.

MARQUIS *entering from back, dressed for the chase.*

MARQ. Hollo, hollo! what the confusion is all this, good people? Is the mill going to be blown up?

POPPY. *(rising—aside*, R.) No, nor I'm not going to be blown up either. It's that old fool, the marquis.

FLORA. *(aside,* L.*—rises.)* The marquis—there's an end of all conversation. Your servant, my lord; I beg your pardon—I was merely chatting with my cousin.

POPPY. *(aside—seated,* R.*)* She calls her snubbing chatting, eh, does she.—Very pretty!

FLORA. (L., *taking knitting.)* I thought you were at the chase, my lord?

MARQ. (C.) So I was, my pretty one: but—but can't you send your cousin away?

FLORA. *(smiling.)* No; you are too dangerous, my lord.

MARQ. *(kissing her hand.)* Irresistible creature! you know me then. Beware of *me*, quintessence. *(puts his hat down.)*

FLORA. *(laughing, then eyeing* POPPY.*)* Why do you look so out of sorts, cousin Corney? *(crossing to* R.*)*

POPPY. I?—One and nothing. She said I was a burden to her. I who would die for her. I would sooner go to the world's end than—one and nothing. *(calculating.)*

FLORA. *(aside.)* He's vexed! Can it be jealousy? Let me take the cue. Why did I not see you yesterday, my lord?

(with rustic coquetry.

MARQ. *(flattered.)* You missed me then, my pretty one?

FLORA. Could I do otherwise, my lord—I only counted the time by your absence. *(ironically.)*

MARQ. *(enchanted—*L.*)* Charming! delightful!

POPPY. *(striking table.)* Detestable! damnable! diabolical!

FLORA. *(aside—*C.*)* I have twitted him at last.

POPPY. Eleven and twenty—twelve. I shall never get through it. Twenty times nothing—no—if—

FLORA. *(repulsing* MARQUIS, *who is attempting to be gallant.)* Fie, fie! my lord—suppose your lady were to know.

MARQ. Psha! let us not think of her, fascinator. *(whispering.)* grant me one hour's *tête-à-tête*, and I sign the bond I spoke about. Come, decide, alone—enchantress. My stay at Windsor is quite uncertain; I may be ordered off at a moment's notice; my regiment is almost complete; my serjeant is quartered at the "Sucking Calf," beating up for recruits.

POPPY. *(aside.)* Ah! a recruiting serjeant at the "Sucking Calf."

MARQ. Only consent, my adorable—my little Venus of Datchet, thus at your feet—*(kneels.)*

POPPY. *(shutting book, and knocking down his chair.)* I now comprehend all: this decides me. Yes, Flora, I should be a monster of ingratitude were I to stay any longer and interrupt your happiness; you shall hear of me all in good time.

Exits hastily at back.

FLORA. *(going to* D. F.) Ah! what has become of him?

(runs to back.

MARQ. *(on his knees.)* Yes, at thy feet—*(raises his head.)* What the plague! has my pretty—how the devil am I to get up?

FLORA. *(looking at back.)* My stratagem has succeeded capitally.

MARQ. *(trying to get up.)* Come here, my pretty—wheugh, wheugh!—*(coughing—aside.)* I shall never be able to get up alone. Come here, my little angel.

FLORA. *(returning.)* What do you wish, my lord?

MARQ. *(catching her hand—rises.)* To tell you, sly one, that you shall not again escape me. Thank the lord! I'm on my legs once more. We must seal the contract with a kiss. I must and will have one. *(follows her round stage.)*

FLORA. *(running behind table.)* You wish for one—do you, my lord?

MARQ. Yes, by Jupiter Ammon, my pretty one.

FLORA. *(mimicing.)* But I say no, by Jupiter Ammon, my pretty one.

(strikes him on wig, he is covered with powder, she escapes laughing by the stairs R., *leading to mill works.*

MARQ. *(alone.)* Bah! a very ingenious retreat of the little prude. Ah she has escaped that way, her own room no doubt —*(runs to door which is shut in his face*—I'm right, she is mine. Flora, delightful Flora, hear your adoring Pretengil—*(bolt is heard.)*—Ah, that bolt, the last efforts of expiring virtue! I'm a terrible fellow. *(hunting horn heard.)* Oh the plague, the stag is at bay; I must away, that I may be ready by virtue of my office as first lord in waiting, to present the horns to his merry majesty, but I'll soon return—*(looking at door.)*—Yes, yes, but how to carry the fortress! Ah, I have it, I will flatter her, bribe her—private residence at Tunbridge Wells, carriage and horses, note five hundred pounds, purchase jewels, &c., it shall be so—*(sits at table.)*—hum, hum, hum!

(writing, takes note from book, encloses it in letter, directs, and seals it.

Enter POPPY *rather flushed—he has bunch of ribbons in his hat —with an air of desperation.*

POPPY. What a delightful thing it is to be a soldier—music playing, drum beating, fife squeaking. Why it would make a perfect coward a hero; when on parade heads up—*(imitates drum.)*—Rub-a-dub, dub, shoulder arms, eyes right, first rank forward, fire! but on the other hand, oh lord, there's nothing over and above pleasant in the sound of the cannon! and then

two can always play at the same game. Pop, pop! but la' we must pay for glory. What's being killed, nothing—long live the King—(*rubbing his hands.*)—I was a burden to her! I was a useless being, good, good, good.

MARQ. (*letter in hand.*) Oh, this fellow here, apropos, Corney!

POPPY. (*hand to hat.*) Yes, general.

MARQ. My good bumpkin, I can't wait for your young mistress any longer—we understand each other very well. Here is my positive ultimatum, which you will deliver to her.

POPPY. Yes, general.

MARQ. (*aside.*) General, why does he call me general? is he intoxicated? Eh, those ribbons—a recruit, ha, ha! (*aloud.*) Mind you make no mistake fellow—(*with authority.*)—I shall be back very soon.

Exit, C., *singing "Sweet God of Love, la, la!" trembling voice.*

POPPY. Flora will see now, at all events, I am not ungrateful, and that the very first moment I was aware that I was a burden to her, I—

FLORA. (*opening door, with lamp.*) I heard the tramp of horses; that odious old marquis is gone, capital; and Corney returned, better still.

POPPY. (*embarrassed.*) Flora here!

FLORA. (*in coaxing tone.*) Where have you been, dear Corney, I was quite uneasy about you.

POPPY. (*aside.*) She is softened a little.

FLORA. Bless me, how smart you are, with your fine ribbons.

POPPY. (*aside.*) I don't know how to tell her.

FLORA. Eh, why what a colour you have got—you look as if you had been drinking.

POPPY. I only took three glasses at the "Sucking Calf," with his lordship the marquis's serjeant.

FLORA. (*uneasily.*) The marquis's serjeant!

POPPY. (*confused.*) You shall never again tell me, cousin, that I am a useless being; I have now an occupation—I am a soldier. (*strutting and crosses* R.)

FLORA. (*screaming.*) You a soldier!

POPPY. Yes a *common soldier* to begin with; but the serjeant assured me, that with my figure and address, I should be made a captain of almost immediately.

FLORA. You will then quit me—leave me?

POPPY. Of course—was I not a burden to you!

FLORA. (*weeping.*) You a burden to me, my cousin, my only protector—who dare say so?

POPPY. (*surprised.*) Why you, yourself, you know.

FLORA. False. (*aside.*) He misunderstands everything. (*aloud.*) It's not true, you shan't go—I will prevent it.

POPPY. You can't now, but I shall come back again, perhaps.

FLORA. But suppose you should be killed!

POPPY. Why then I can't come back, that's all.

FLORA. I shall then be left all alone in the world; if I am insulted there will be no one to take my part; if there must be fighting, why shouldn't people fight their own battles; and then, if you should escape, perhaps you'll be marrying some fine lady; but you won't, you'll be killed, I know how heroic you are—I shall have no protector!

POPPY. Oh, won't you though. Ain't there his lordship, the marquis, my general. Stay, I forgot—here's a letter from him for you.

FLORA. A letter! give it me. (*reads.*) What do I see? The wretch! to insult me in this manner.

POPPY. Why what's the matter, cousin?

FLORA. Read, read!

POPPY. (*reading.*) "Incomparable beauty—resistless enslaver—private residence—and five hundred pounds." What a damned scoundrel! Oh, if I only had my sword on. But no, that wouldn't do neither; he's my general, and he would have me shot by court-martial, or the halberts at least. (*in rage.*) What shall I do—what shall I do? (*crosses to* L.)

FLORA. Such a thing never would have been if I had had a husband; for then, to insult the wife would have been insulting the husband.

POPPY. Insulting the husband?

FLORA. Certainly; man and wife are one, you know.

POPPY. (*struck.*) What a light breaks in upon me!

FLORA. What do you mean?

POPPY. What do I mean? Oh, I know—I'll soon let him know what I mean. (*runs to table, writes, occasionally looking at Marquis's letter.*) Poor, dear Flora, to say that I only thought of myself. (*puts note in the letter he has just written, seals and directs it.*) Here, now then—Clem!

CLEM. (*running in,* R. 2 E..) Well, Corney?

(CORNEY *speaks in an undertone to him.*

FLORA. What can he be going to do?

POPPY. (*to* CLEM.) Run directly to the castle with this, and deliver it as directed.

CLEM. Ay, ay, master Corney. *Exit,* C. *down steps.*

POPPY. (*proudly taking stage.*) There, I've done it: you're revenged, cousin Flora.

FLORA. Revenged?

POPPY. Yes, old Gallygaskins has paid court to you—is in love with you; he has taught me my duty. I, too, am in love —(*proudly.*) in love with his wife. (*crossing* R.)

FLORA. Mercy me!

POPPY. I have declared my passion to her; I have insulted her by avowing my tenderness and making proposals: to insult her is to insult him, as you say, as he's her husband; and there's one comfort, she can't shoot me.

FLORA. Unfortunate Corney! poor Poppy! your doom will be the cat-o'-ninetails; you'll be flayed to death at the halberts.

POPPY. With all my heart—welcome the cat-o'-ninetails.

FLORA. (*running to window.*) You must call Clem back.

POPPY. I won't.

FLORA. Then I will. (*running to the door.*) My goodness! if there ain't the marchioness's carriage coming this way. The fool has stopped it—and gives the letter.

POPPY. So much the better. We shall have fine fun—that for the cat-o'-ninetails. (*snapping fingers, and crosses* R.)

CLEM *returns to the works,* R. U. E.

FLORA. The carriage is coming here; away, sir—haste—away

POPPY. No, I shall not go; I will stay and insult her to the uttermost: I will throw myself at her feet: I will kiss her hand: I—

FLORA. You take that, puppy! (*boxing his ears, and crosses up stage,* L.)

POPPY. Oh, lord! what a stinger.

FLORA. Away, I say, sir; this is *my* affair.

POPPY. (*with hand on cheek.*) Zounds! what can be the matter with her? Well, I'm going. (*aside.*) She'll box t'other side, if I don't let her have her own way, I suppose. Oh, lord, oh, lord! only let me have a drill or two.

Exit at sign from FLORA, R. H.

FLORA. It's plain he does not love me; he will never love me; he thinks of everybody but me. It's all over—I give all up; but let me at least get him out of the scrape he has got himself into with the marchioness. Ah! she is here.

Enter MARCHIONESS, *suffocated with rage,* C.

MARCH. I am suffocated—the world's at an end—a wretch —where's the fellow? Oh, you are there, are you, miss?

FLORA. (*embarrassed.*) Madam!

MARCH. He must be somewhere at hand. Call your fine cousin—call this Corney Poppy, I say!

FLORA. (*trembling.*) My cousin Corney! What may be your ladyship's pleasure with him?

MARCH. I'll have him thrown out of the window—made mincemeat of—an insolent, audacious libertine!

FLORA. This anger—believe me, your ladyship is deceived.

MARCH. But it serves me right; I have been too condescending. Such abominable temerity! Proposals to me!

FLORA. Will you allow me, my lady?

MARCH. (*reading.*) "Incomparable beauty—resistless enslaver!"—A paltry journeyman miller!

FLORA. Good heavens—

MARCH. "No longer doubt my love. My sentry box—the whole of my pay."

FLORA. Imprudent Corney! he has imitated the marquis's letter. (*goes to table and picks up letter.*)

MARCH. (*reading.*) Has the fellow lost his senses?

FLORA. He is not so culpable as you imagine, my lady; for his letter is merely an imitation—here is the original.

MARCH. How! from the marquis to you, girl—(*opens it.*) let me see, can I believe my eyes? (*compares letters.*) What indignity! the same expressions.

FLORA. (*artfully.*) My cousin's letter was merely written to induce your ladyship to come here, that all might be explained to you—nothing more, believe me.

MARCH. (*aside, walking stage* R. *and* L.) My husband, the monster! Oh, these men. I thought I was mighty prudent in marrying one so much beyond my years; but it serves me right. (*looking at her.*) Still I am not *your* dupe, miss. You have been flirting with the marquis, girl?

FLORA. Not much, my lady.

MARCH. How not much?

FLORA. (*agitated.*) Only once, and that was to force poor Corney to—

MARCH. Your cousin?

FLORA. Yes, my lady, I loved him, but he was unconscious of it. I wished, without his perceiving it, insensibly to attach him to me; for this purpose I flirted with everyone that came to the mill, hoping my coquetry would at last awaken his passion—example is everything in these matters, my lady—(*weeping.*)—but it was all useless; he does *not* love me—he will *never* love me, and I am wretched. (*goes* R., *crying.*)

MARCH. Indeed, this alters the case—those tears! (*aside.*) She strangely interests me. Do not despair, thus, my child. I will give your cousin a hint.

FLORA. Oh no, no, my lady; he would only feel gratitude towards me; that would not be enough. My mind is made up:

he shall have from me a sum of money sufficient to enable him to marry who he chooses to have—I have strength enough to conceal my anguish. But your kindness encourages me to solicit a favour at your hands—it is, to procure the discharge of my unfortunate cousin, who, in a moment of wounded pride at some observations that fell from me, in my jealous madness, rashly enlisted this morning in his lordship the marquis's regiment. (*wipes her eyes.*)

MARCH. Ah! (*aside.*) His majesty will not refuse to grant me this—the first favour I ever asked at his hands. Be assured, my child—trust all to me—rely on my protection, my friendship. I haste at once. (*examines letters.*) You say that the marquis—

FLORA. Oh, I detest him! I beg your pardon, my lady.

MARCH. Make no apologies; our sentiments are quite similar in that respect. (*puts letter in pocket.*) His lordship shall pay for this. Farewell! but not for long.

FLORA. Heaven bless your ladyship!

(*curtseys* MARCHIONESS *out, then returns, lost in thought;* POPPY, *with lamp, steals on cautiously at door* R.

POPPY. (*aside.*) So the marchioness is gone. I wonder whether my scheme has answered. What's Flora in such a brown study about? Ah! talking to herself—I'll listen.

FLORA. (*musing—sits at table,* L.) After all, it is not poor Corney's fault. Love is not always at one's command. He was not obliged to love *me* any more than I was obliged to love *him*, when I couldn't help loving him, though he never would see it—never would understand it. Mine's a sad fate, and I was once so happy. (*sits in thought.*)

POPPY. (*aside.*) What a stupid fellow I am! Love—love what? To think now that she should have been loving me all this time, and I not know it. So much as I love her—I ought to be kicked! There's one comfort—I daresay I shall be flogged very soon. Poor cousin Flora—but, now I think on it, that box on the ear betrayed all her tenderness. I must rouse her, or she'll think I've been listening on purpose. (*pretends to tumble over chair.*)

FLORA. (*seeing him.*) Ah! are you there, Corney?

POPPY. (*stammering.*) Yes, yes, cousin Flora; I wished to say that, that—confound me if I can say a word, my tongue seems fairly glued to my mouth. (*coaxingly.*) Oh, Flora—dear cousin Flora!

FLORA. Well!

POPPY. I wish you many happy returns of the day. (*blowing ksses.*)

FLORA. (*smiling, rises, not looking at him.*) You are a little

too late; the day, you know, is over—it's night, now, Corney; but never mind, I am just as much obliged to you!

POPPY. (*aside.*) Um, that won't do—I'll try again. (*aloud.*) I am sure, cousin, if I have ever vexed you, I am very sorry—but—but—

FLORA. You have not vexed me at all, Corney; besides, you are going to have your discharge—I have spoken about it to the marchioness—have explained all—she has promised. (*going to her room.*) Good night! (*takes lamp,* D. *table.*)

POPPY. Are you going so soon, Flora?

FLORA. Yes, I wish to be alone, Corney.

POPPY. But—but—it is supper time.

FLORA. I have no appetite—I have a headache.

POPPY. (*getting more assured.*) You were talking just now of my marriage, cousin, and I thought—

FLORA. (*aside, stopping.*) Ah! I understand; he does love some one else. (*aloud.*) We will talk of this to-morrow. Rely on it, you shall be happy, Corney! Yes, I promise you, whatever it may cost me.

POPPY. (*moved.*) But—but—

FLORA. (*agitated.*) To-morrow—to-morrow! Good night, Corney; good night, cousin. (*at door.*) Shut up the mill, and go to bed. Good night, Corney.

POPPY. (*agitated.*) Good night, Flora. (*louder.*) Pleasant dreams; goo—goo—good night. (*she shuts the door.*) I certainly am a jackass. I richly deserve the cat-o'-nine-tails, and I dare say I shall soon have it—(*with vexation.*)—all cowards have, and I'm a coward! Afraid of speaking!—to addle all the eggs in that way—a pretty fellow of a soldier! (*looking at her door.*)

FLORA. (*from her room.*) Not gone to bed yet, Corney? I still see your candle.

POPPY. No, Flora, I am going. (*extinguishes candle.*) Now it is dark I have more courage. (*approaches chamber.*) Go to bed! no, I will pass the night at her door; I will speak to her through the keyhole; I will weep—I will ask her pardon. (*sound of wheels without.*) What do I hear? Some one is coming up the ladder, and I forgot to take it away and shut the mill up. Should it be robbers, so much the better. I am a soldier! I shall be able to show my courage, and die defending her! (*struck with an idea.*) I must see who it is. Let me hide.

(*Gets into bin, cover falls down. Two* SERVANTS *enter,* D. F., *lay cloth, and place dishes on table, which they take from a basket—pastry, pigeons, pies, &c.; light two wax candles, which they have brought from a dark lantern.*)

Enter MARQUIS, D. F., *on tiptoe.*

MARQ. I must make no noise. I must be careful not to create an alarm. 'Tis plain she has seen and accepts my terms, by the coast being kept so clear. I must let the little charmer know that supper is ready. What a delightful *tête a tête* we shall have to be sure! I shall enjoy this supper, seated side by side with the irresistible little beauty over this pastry and canary!

POPPY. *(aside.)* I'll undertake to provide the dessert.

MARQ. I understand the signal—the candle is extinguished.

POPPY. *(aside.)* 'Twas I that put it out. What an old ass!

MARQ. *(to* SERVANTS.*)* You may go, Jeremy and Nicodemus; let the carriage be waiting at the entrance of the forest, the town side. *Exeunt* SERVANTS, D. F.

POPPY. The carriage! I'll grease his wheels for him!

MARQ. The little angel has fairly turned my brain. After our repast I will carry her off.

POPPY. Carry her off! more likely to carry something else off! *(shaking stick.)*

MARQ. *(looking round.)* Eh? what the plague—I thought I heard a voice! But where is my little charmer?

POPPY. *(in mincing voice,* R.*)* Heigho! coo-biddy, coo-biddy, coo!

MARQ. It must be her voice; it sounded from that room. She escaped that way; she wants me to coax her out—a little tender pressing! Oh, the pretty — *(goes to door.)* — this silence and darkness—but I will proceed. *(opens door, going up stairs, rubbing hands.)* She did not expect this manœuvre!

*(*POPPY *gets out of bin, and softly closes door upon him.)*

POPPY. Nor did you expect this manœuvre, old cock! *(goes to door, and listens.)* Ah! that is right; grope your way up. It will take him two hours, at least, before he can find his way through the machinery of the mill. As for the supper, I'll soon dispose of that; it shall go out of window! Stay, that would be a pity, too. It smells very nice; besides, my feelings have quite exhausted me. *(struck with an idea.)* Capital, capital! It shall be so—under the old griffin's very nose! *(calling.)* Flora! Flora!—dearest Flora!

FLORA. *(from room.)* Not yet gone to bed, Corne

POPPY. I could not sleep, dear Flora!

FLORA. *(at window.)* Nor could I, Corney; but it's getting very late—what do I see? What a grand supper!

POPPY. It's a little surprise I have provided for your birthday, cousin.

FLORA. *(smiling.)* For me, Corney?—and you never told me!

POPPY. What's the use of that? The proof of the pudding will be in the eating. It smells well, so come—

FLORA. But I am half undressed.

POPPY. Never mind that; what's the use of ceremony? (*coaxingly.*)

FLORA. Well, wait a moment, and I will join you. (*disappears.*)

POPPY. (*aside.*) Capital! we shall have supper together. I feel I shall have heart enough to speak to her then. Ah! here she is. (FLORA *appears in undress, shawl over shoulders.*)

FLORA. (*arranging dress.*) You are a sad plague when you take anything into your head, Corney.

POPPY. (*admiring her.*) How beautiful she is! I never saw her in her night dress before.

FLORA. (*sitting.*) Now, then, Corney, come, take your seat.

POPPY. (*runs and seats himself.*) Next to you, cousin? Oh, how prime!

FLORA. How you wriggle about in your chair! (*aside.*) What can be the matter with him? What a supper you have got! I am almost ready to scold you, Corney. How?—venison pasty, widgeons, marchpane, canary golden water!

POPPY These widgeons are from the royal preserves! Will you have a leg or a wing, or both? I hope you are hungry; I know I am. (*helps her plentifully.*)

FLORA. Bless me, how gallant he is all of a sudden! He was never so before; what can it mean?

POPPY. Now let us hob and nob, in a thumping bumper of canary, the loving cup! (*aside.*) Come, I think she'll understand that.

MARQ. (*putting head through high opening.*) Where the devil am I? I have been fumbling about here for an hour. (*sees table.*) Ah, what do I see?

FLORA. (*looking up.*) Whose voice was that I heard?

POPPY. Hush! it's old quisby, the marquis.

FLORA. (*aside.*) The marquis! Bless me, what is he doing up there?

POPPY. Taking the air. He came to treat you to a little surprise; it is his supper I've got.

FLORA. (*aside.*) *His* supper! Oh, then, of course, we must do honour to it. Let us eat.

POPPY. Don't spare it. (*they eat voraciously.*)

MARQ. (*aside.*) I am up among the works *here*, while they are making pretty work of it *there*, with my eatables. I daren't hollo out, or I should make a laughing-stock of myself.

POPPY. (*aside.*) Suppose I make love to you, cousin, just to vex him?

FLORA. Yes, do so, Poppy dear! 'Twill be the very thing. I shall be so pleased. *(aside.)* Shan't be sorry to see how he does it.

POPPY. *(taking her hand.)* Flora, dear Flora!—dear cousin Flora! you do not know how much I love you. I love you—I love you fifty thousand times more than nothing!

FLORA. *(aside.)* Not so much amiss.

MARQ. *(aside.)* What is that little fool doing?

POPPY. *(rising.)* By, the bye, cousin, I have not given you a kiss; and you know it's your birthday.

FLORA. *(aside.)* True, you must not forget that.

*(*POPPY *wipes mouth, and kisses her five or six times.)*

MARQ. *(aside.)* The rascally libertine! What immorality!

POPPY. *(smacking lips.)* How nice!

FLORA. *(aside.)* One would really think he was in earnest.

MARQ. *(aside.)* The scoundrel! When he joins the regiment, his back shall finely pay for this; he shall be nicely tickled. What can I throw at his head?

POPPY *(seating himself.)* And now, dear Flora, let us have some more canary, let us drink one another's health. *(throws cork where* MARQUIS *is.)*

MARQ. *(putting hand to eye.)* The idiot has bunged up my eye with his infernal cork. (POPPY *pours out more wine; they drink lovingly.)* This is too much, I can bear it no longer. *(disappears, and is heard tumbling down stairs.)*

FLORA. *(screaming.)* Ah!

POPPY. *(moving chairs, &c.)* What a whop!—came down with a run!

FLORA. Good heavens! he'll break his neck.

POPPY. No matter; more likely he'll break some of the machinery, and that wouldn't be quite so well.

FLORA. Quick, quick, Corney, and open the door, and let's see if any mischief is done.

POPPY. Well, as you desire; though I don't see very great necessity. *(opens door.)* Oh, he is here.

MARQUIS *enters, his clothes covered with flour.*

MARQ. *(aside.)* Infamous! *(to* FLORA.*)* I will be revenged!

FLORA. My lord marquis!

MARQ. *(to* POPPY.*)* You, my fine fellow, must obey your general, and follow the drum, so march. *(to* FLORA.*)* And you, my charmer, must obey *your* general, and follow me.

POPPY. Oh lord!

MARQ. *(going to door at back.)* Now, now, Jerningham. *(calling off.)*

MARCHIONESS *enters*, D. F.

MARCH. (*stopping.*) Good heavens!

FLORA. (*to* POPPY.) The marchioness! we are saved.

MARCH. (*to* MARQUIS.) You here, my lord?

MARQ. The devil! the marchioness. What can have brought *her* here? Can she suspect? (*forcing a smile, and taking by mistake* POPPY'S *miller's hat, and puts it under his arm.*) Yes, I —I—marchioness—I—

MARCH. (*looking at his dress.*) Bless me, what an object you are, my lord?

POPPY. He's a perfect plaster of Paris, ain't he?

MARQ. (*confused, and shaking himself.*) It is nothing, ha, ha! (*affecting laugh.*) "Whoso toucheth pitch"—(*aloud.*) I—I —I—(*stammering.*)—came here for a particular purpose. (*throwing away hat.*) Where is my own hat? That fellow ought to be with his regiment. He must be off immediately. I have my reasons.

MARCH. Not so; he must remain. I have *my* reasons, too. Here is his majesty's discharge. I thought I could not do better, my lord, than in behalf that poor fellow to—(*crossing,* C., POPPY *taking discharge joyfully, and hugging* FLORA.)

FLORA. Oh, your ladyship.

MARQ. (*aside,* R.) This is the finishing stroke. It is plain she knows my secret.

MARCH. I have a small addition to make to his majesty's command. After the royal discharge, his majesty should have ordered the said Corney Poppy to marry his cousin, Flora Granger, within the next twenty-four hours.

POPPY. No occasion for that at all, my lady—no occasion at all—I'll do it within the next six hours, if that's all. Eh, Flora? (*embrace.*)

FLORA. Oh, my lady.

MARCH. I charge myself with your marriage portion, young folks. Take this goldsmith's note for five hundred pounds, which my lord the marquis gave me in charge for you. Eh, my lord? (*showing it to him.*)

MARQ. Oh yes, certainly, certainly. (*aside.*) Fairly tricked, by Jove.

CLEM. (*putting head through aperture.*) The wind has changed, mistress.

POPPY. (*with command.*) Then set the mill going, Clem.

CLEM. (*contemptuously.*) By whose order?

POPPY. Your master's.

FLORA. (*with pride.*) Yes, Clem, *your* master and *mine!* That is, with our kind friends' permission; for if the breath of

their approbation does but fill our sails, all will go merrily on; their sanction will always bring plenty of grist to our mill; the harvest will have been fairly gathered in, and we shall only have to reap the reward, which it will be our proudest boast to have endeavoured to deserve.

CURTAIN.

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